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ABSTRACT

Some of the major extant works on the history of American Catholic education are discussed to provide a background for an outline of the general framework of the author's projected three-volume history. In this projected study, the author will: 1) examine the broad spectrum of educational agencies that have helped to shape the Catholic mind in an ever-changing American society; 2) examine a host of educational alternatives open to the church at different periods in her history, and place the development of the parochial school system in proper perspective; 3) examine new insights and interpretations in the various fields of American history and American religious history, look at the insights of the behavioral and social sciences, and attempt to incorporate empirical research data and techniques. Tentative titles and lines of investigation are spelled out for each of the three volumes. (Author/JLB)

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TOWARD A NEW HISTORY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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In The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley: An Essay On The Historiography of American Education (1965), Lawrence Cremin analyzed the traditional interpretation of public education in America. In its most classic statement, Ellwood Cubberley's Public Education in the United States (1919) argued that the public school seed had taken root in colonial America. During the first part of the nineteenth century, there was a great crusade in behalf of public education--a period in which public education had to win numerous battles against the forces of reaction. The last half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed the extension and refinement of these victories. The moral was obvious: an inextricable relationship existed between the rise of the public school and the progress of America. This explains why the public school played only a marginal role in colonial America and then emerged as a central national institution in the second half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Moreover, Cubberley's emphasis was on schools and little attention was given to other agencies of education. This Cubberlerian interpretation, extended and refined, remained the basic explanation of public education until the 1960's.

In 1960, Bernard Bailyn's Education in the Forming of American Society challenged the Cubberlerian interpretation. Bailyn disputed the "seed approach" to public education and faulted Cubberley's silence on non-school agencies of education. He denied that "the past was simply the present writ small" and postulated, among other things, that "public education as it was in the late nineteenth century, and is now, had not grown from known seventeenth century seeds; it was a new and unexpected genus whose ultimate character could not have been predicted and whose emergence had troubled well-disposed

high-minded people." Cremin essentially endorsed Bailyn's approach, and modified and refined it in The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley (1965) and in The Genius of American Education (1965). Then, with the help of a generous Carnegie grant, Cremin embarked upon a reinterpretation of American education--the first new approach since 1919. The first of his projected three volumes was published in late 1970 as American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1606-1783 and has altered traditional historiography about colonial education.

II

American Catholic educational historiography has developed along similar lines. The Catholic equivalent to Cubberley was the Reverend James A. Burns who published the first general account of Catholic education in two volumes: The Principles, Origin, and Establishment of the Catholic School System in the United States (1908); and The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States (1912). While Cubberley saw the rise of the public school as inextricably tied to the progress of America, Burns saw the rise of the Catholic school as inextricably tied to the progress of the Church in America. Burns presented this view clearly in the following statement:

> A direct relation existed between the development of the Church and the development of Catholic schools....The relation between Church and school has been, in fact, so close that it is impossible to disassociate the history of the one from that of the other. The parish school has been from the very beginning an agency of the Church. It is really a part of the Church's wider organization, and both in principles and in practical working it belongs to the Church's system (I, pp. 14-15).

Both volumes then dealt with the evolution of the Catholic school system from colonial times to the beginning of the twentieth century. Just as Cubberley's public school seed evolved from colonial times and engaged in a series of major battles before it became an integral part of American society, so Burns'

Catholic school system existed "in embryo" in colonial times, fought a host of battles during the nineteenth century, and became an integral part of Catholic society in the opening decades of the twentieth century. The growth of the American Catholic Church as a whole signaled the growth of the Catholic school movement. The time factor was important and progress was inevitable:

> [In colonial times], whenever Catholic settlements were formed and Catholic life reached any degree of maturity, Catholic schools were set up and a corresponding educational development took place. In settlements where Catholic life was weak or short-lived, either no schools were established, or those that were had only a short or desultory existence. In the post-Revolutionary period, the relation is even more clearly illustrated. The growth of Catholic parish schools and their organization into a great system has kept an even pace, in a remarkable way, with the rapid and extraordinary growth of the Church. The main factors in the Church's development--immigration and migration, the hierarchy, parish and diocesan organization, the religious Orders, the Councils--have constituted also the main factors in the growth of the schools. And the influences that were at work to retard the Church's progress have had a correspondingly hampering effect upon the schools (I, p. 15).

But the point is that Catholic schools were in America from the very beginning. True, Cubberley's seed became in Burns' clerical mind the Biblical "mustard-seed." Yet seed it was and the seed needed time to grow into the full-fledged system of parish schools that emerged in late nineteenth century America and blossomed forth in the twentieth century. Here is Burns' concluding paragraph (with title) of his chapter entitled "Characteristics of Catholic Colonial Schools":

A SYSTEM IN EMBRYO

> One other point remains to be noticed. The Catholic schools existing in the English colonies at the time of the Revolution were already, to some extent, thrown into the form of a system. They were all under the control of the Jesuit Order. In the case of religious instruction, if not of all the subjects taught, their work was based upon an ideal common to all institutions in charge of that great teaching body. They were looked upon also as but the base of an educational edifice which was to be made to include, in time, facilities for the complete education of Catholic youth under Catholic auspices. And they were regarded as an indispensable adjunct of parochial organization. New parishes, accordingly, as they grew up, gave rise to new parish schools. The

> grain of mustard-seed planted by the pioneer Jesuit educators had, by the time of the Revolution, struck its roots deep into the soil. We shall see how rapidly it grew and developed, and how far it threw out its branches, under the influence of the universal stir and movement to which the Revolution gave rise (I, pp. 164-165).

Therefore, argued Burns, the Catholic school system had been an authentic system of American education from the very beginnings of our country. By implication, therefore, such a parallel system was entitled to the same public support as the other authentic tradition--public education.

Burns' two volumes remained the only general history of American Catholic education for the next quarter of a century. In 1937 Bernard Kohlbrenner abridged Burns' two volumes into one slender volume, A History of Catholic Education in the United States (to be used as "A Textbook for Normal Schools and Teachers' Colleges"), brought the story up to date, and added several chapters of his own. In the first chapter, Kohlbrenner attempted to demonstrate the "Continuity in History of Education" by showing the "close resemblance in essential features," between the Catholic education of his time and the "education that was developed long before the twentieth century"--that "today's possessions are but the culmination of a thousand yesterdays (p. 1)." After examining the Church's traditional commitment to education from the New Testament to the Reformation period, he concluded that this "line of development is therefore continuous" with American Catholic education. The line might be thin but at least the seed was present--indeed much further back than in the American colonial past. Thus, Kohlbrenner incorporated Burns' "mustard-seed" approach to Catholic education and continued the story into the 1930's.

It took nearly another quarter of a century to produce the third general history of Catholic education. Of Singular Benefit: The Story of U.S. Catholic Education (1970), written by the Reverend Harold A. Buetow, followed the Burns-Kohlbrenner interpretation of American Catholic education--updated to

the late 1960's. In his introduction, Buetow described his chronological breakdown of Catholic education in America:

> The first section, 'Colonial Period of Transplantation,' extends to 1783....The next period, 'Formative Foundations,' beginning in 1784 and ending in 1828, looks more within these shores....The 'Transition' from 1829 to 1884 includes all of the Councils of Baltimore....The period from 1885 witnesses 'Further Growth'....The years from 1918 to 1957 displayed a 'Maturing Process'....'Contemporary Soulsearching and Ferment' begins in 1958....(pp. xi-xii).

All the essential ingredients were here. The seed-to-fruition theme was expressed in such terms as "Transplantation," "Formative," "Transition," "Further Growth," and "Maturing Process." Of course this progressive improvement of Catholic schools was directly related to the progress of the American Church. The basic format of Buetow's book revealed a remarkable similarity with Burns' two volumes. Finally, the author included the traditional inspirational remarks for his readers, thus following a long tradition of educational historians. Alluding to the many "firsts" in Catholic education (for example, the first printing press in Michigan belonged to a Catholic which "turned out textbooks in addition to a newpaper"), Buetow concluded that American Catholic education has "brought certain patters into bold relief:"

> For example, there is in these pages a larger number of heroes to warrant admiration, and an appreciably smaller number of rogues, than in comparably-sized groups elsewhere. Secondly, the over-all effect is not a wonderment at some things that were left undone, but amazement that so much was done with so little. Also, the entire phenomenon seems from many points of view to be a miracle of American society (pp. 367-368).

Buetow told his story generally well. But it was the same old story brought up to date--with few new insights offered or alternative options discussed. In pursuing the old battles, the author missed an opportunity to break new historical ground in understanding the total educational commitment of the American Catholic Church.

It may be well to summarize the major themes of the Burns-Kohlbrenner-Buetow interpretation of American Catholic education.

1. Reliance was placed on the seed-to-fruition theory to explain the rise of Catholic education in America. This seed took root in colonial soil, surfaced in the nineteenth century, and matured in the twentieth century. But the point is that the seed was always present. And if one looked hard enough, he could trace this seed into the early centuries of the Christian dispensation. This interpretation assumed a progressively evolutionary viewpoint--that the parochial school seed flourished in direct proportion to the growth of the American Catholic Church.

2. This interpretation concluded that the establishment of parochial schools in the United States was inevitable given the philosophy and traditions of the Church. Differences were blurred between schools in early Christian times, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and American parochial schools of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From this perspective, the absence of parochial schools at some times and places in America was taken as evidence that there simply were not yet enough Catholics to create the institutions which they, as Catholics, would necessarily seek to create.

3. Although Burns, Kohlbrenner, and Buetow all purported to discuss Catholic education, in reality they concentrated almost exclusively on schooling. Just as Cubberley located the public school seed in colonial America, so Burns, Kohlbrenner, and Buetow searched for the parochial school "mustard-seed" in the same locale and time. But since the English colonies were Protestant preserves, these Catholic historians devoted much attention to locating the parochial school in the French and Spanish New World missions. These Catholic ventures were seen as the prototype for the Church's concern

for education, and these authors emphasized the establishment of a school whenever they could find one. This was even more obvious they they discussed the English colonies. For example, each author waxed eloquently as he indicated the site of the first Catholic school at Newtown, Maryland in 1640.

III

Some recent historians, myself included, have argued that the American Catholic Church was not irrevocably committed to a system of parochial schools. But instead of investigating the alternatives to these schools, they became preoccupied with defining at just what point the bishops and church councils made such a commitment. Was it the pastoral letter of Bishop John Carroll? Was it one or more council held at Baltimore from 1829 to 1884? Was it the initial efforts of Bishop John Hughes of New York? Even when historians disagreed over time and place, they generally concluded that all Catholics accepted the principle of parochial schools but for reasons of tactics or expediency chose not to comply immediately. Alternatively, they agreed that those who did not heed the parochial school model were lax or liberalizing Catholics; in short, not real Catholics.

My earlier historical work has fallen somewhat into this category of explanation. The first and last chapters of my book, Public Money and Parochial Education: Bishop Hughes, Governor Seward and the New York School Controversy (1968), attempted to arrive at the crucial point when the parochial school movement was given definitive form. Subsequent articles pursued this theme but less so as I began to contemplate historical educational alternatives to parochial schools. This shift in my thinking was influenced by Lawrence Cremin's insights concerning the history of American public education and by Robert Cross' seminal paper on Catholic schools in the nine-

teenth century (1964). Both men encouraged me to ask new questions about the American Catholic Church's educational mandate and the various options it used historically. In this way the Church's total educational enterprise will be understood instead of the search for the few existing schools.

At the present time, I contemplate the following general framework for a new history of Catholic education.

1. Throughout this study, I will tentatively adopt Cremin's definition of education "as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit or evoke knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and sensibilities." Such a definition is more limited than enculturation or socialization but more extensive than schooling. "Education, defined thus," concludes Cremin, "clearly produces outcomes in the lives of individuals, many of them discernable, though other phenomena, varying from politics to commerce to technology to earthquakes, may prove more influential at particular times and in particular instances (American Education, p. xiii)." Within this definition, I will examine the broad spectrum of educational agencies that have helped to shape the Catholic mind and psyche in an ever-changing American society.

2. This view of education will serve as a focus for examining a host of educational alternatives open to the Church at different periods of her history and place the development of the parochial school system in proper perspective. Such a view will deemphasize the "mustard-seed" interpretation of Catholic schooling and the need to find the deterministically-ordered parochial school. Instead of limiting this study to Catholic schools which never educated a majority of Catholic children, I will examine the other options used by the Church historically as legitimate outlets for her educational responsi-

bility. In investigating these alternatives, I will attempt to explain why the parochial school model took hold of the nineteenth and twentieth century American Catholic mind.

3. Of special interest for this study will be the following: new insights and interpretations in the various fields of American history (Herbert J. Bass, ed., The State of American History, 1970); new interpretations in American religious history, especially in Catholic history (Philip Gleason, ed., Catholicism in America, 1970); the use of comparative data in appraising the American Catholic experience; the insights of the behavioral and social sciences and the use of empirical research data and techniques. In this connection, Robert Cross once suggested that empirical studies of parish schools were crucial in understanding the parochial school movement. I have made a start in this direction. With the aid of several graduate students, I have read over one thousand terribly-dull histories of American Catholic parishes. I hoped for, and am finding, information not only about parish schools but also about the whole gamut of educational agencies used by these parishes in educating their flocks. I am in the process of programing this information and feeding it into the computer. Although initial results indicate some predictable patterns, other results seem to contradict traditional interpretations. In time, I will make several test studies of carefully selected schools to ascertain their relationship to other educational agencies in the parish and to the general educational mandate of the Church.

IV

I am projecting a three-volume history of Catholic education in America--though it may very well turn out to be two larger volumes. The first volume will examine Catholic education during the colonial period and the first de-

cades of the nineteenth century. The second volume will deal with the nineteenth century immigrant Catholic Church and end with World War I. The third volume will begin with the immigrant-restricting decades of the 1920's and end with the Second Vatican Council and its influence on the 1960's and 1970's.

At this point, I would like to indicate the tentative titles and lines of interpretation for each of the three volumes.

Volume I. Strangers in Zion: The Colonial Period

The basic theme of this volume is that English America was a Protestant preserve for the new chosen people of God. The New World was "God's American Israel" and the colonists were the new elect. This religious identity, together with their English ethnicity, united the colonists as subjects of the English crown. In this essentially Reformation period, Catholics were considered "strangers in Zion." They were either proscribed or at best tolerated even in more favored Maryland and Rhode Island. In a sense, they constituted the first alienated sub-group in America. In time, with their European experience behind them, they adjusted to this tolerated and second-class condition.

Nevertheless Catholic children participated in some form of the educational process. European Catholic modes of education, especially in anti-Catholic England and in pro-Catholic France, formed an indispensable framework for the Catholic colonial experience. Since schools were few and far between, to look for the parochial school "mustard-seed" is to miss the focus of colonial Catholic education. Certainly the handful of Catholics was too little organized to contemplate organizing a system of Catholic schools. These Catholics, including the few clergymen, adjusted to their minority status and learned not to rock the boat. This situation continued through

the Revolutionary period and into the first decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the first Catholic bishops actively pursued this compromise policy. Thus, Catholics retained their status as "strangers in Zion.

Yet other educational alternatives present themselves for investigation. Was the educational "baggage" of English Catholics fundamentally different from that of English Protestants? What was the extent of their religious knowledge and nature of their popular piety and how were these passed on? Was the organization of the Catholic family different from that of the Protestant family? What was the nature of the child-rearing practices of Catholic parents? Did Catholics manage to participate in the life of the general community? Such questions come to the fore once historians stop concentrating on the illusive search for the Catholic school system "in embryo."

Volume II. Behind the Wall: A Century of Immigration and Education

The theme of the first volume will continue into the second. The nineteenth century witnessed the arrival of large numbers of Catholic immigrants (initially Irish and German) into the United States. Many native Americans branded these immigrants as papists and foreigners. The traditional enmity between Irish Catholics and English Protestants surfaced from the shadows. An active nativism emerged during the pre-Civil War decades. The Catholic Church increasingly became an immigrant and more militant church and experienced a high water mark of active hostility against its creed, organization, institutions, leadership, and immigrant way of life. Overt forms of this behavior resulted in the burning of convents, manhandling of priests, printing of anti-Catholic exposé literature, and Protestant-Catholic riots in several cities. Protestant organizations, helped by an evangelical awakening, were established to convert Catholics. English and French Catholics lost control

of the Church and the new immigrant leadership found it difficult to understand the Protestant heritage and mentality of America. They looked all about and everywhere they saw enemies of their traditional faith. They perceived themselves at war with a heretical majority and viewed American Catholicism in a state of siege against a powerful and determined enemy. Because of this suspicion of an unsympathetic and often hostile majority, many Catholic churchmen unfortunately, though perhaps understandably, adopted a defensive mentality and never seriously attempted to integrate their predominantly immigrant flocks into the mainstream of American life. They felt themselves suffocated in a hostile society and gradually developed a religious and cultural separatism to go along with their physical separatism.

American Catholicism began to establish a whole series of institutional structures to defend itself in this physical, social, and psychological siege. Catholics retreated "behind the wall" and developed a ghetto mentality. Parishes became stronger; parish organizations offered social, religious, and intellectual outlets for their parishioners; Catholic associations came to the fore to protect Catholic professionals. These structures played an important role in preserving the Catholic immigrant in his minority status as a marginal American.

What was true for the total life of Catholics was equally true for their education. Their negative attitute toward society in general reflected their sentiments toward public education. Common schools were categorized as religiously unacceptable to Catholics and were generally condemned by the hierarchy. At this point, Catholic historians traditionally saw the emerging of the colonial "mustard-seed" of the parochial school system. No doubt there was an increased emphasis on Catholic schools in an era when there was an

increased emphasis on schooling in general. Yet it does seem clear that these schools became part of the defensive wall structure of Catholics.

After the Civil War, non-English speaking immigrants (especially Germans, Italians, and Poles) opted for parochial schools for religious as well as cultural reasons. Yet not all bishops viewed the parochial school as the only educational option available to Catholics. Men like Archbishop Ireland offered alternatives that were not acceptable to the majority of his coreligionists. By the end of the First World War and the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1918, the Church sponsored the parochial school as its national educational agency.

A series of questions pose themselves at this point. Why did the Church decide in favor of such a policy? Even so, never more than half of the Catholic children ever attended these schools. What other parallel educational agencies operated along side or in place of the school? For example, the relationship between Catholic parish life and the late nineteenth century social settlement movement has never been fully explored from an educational viewpoint. I know of two parishes, one in Cleveland and one in New York City, which implemented the social settlement concept within the parish structure (neither parish had a parochial school) at the beginning of the twentieth century. In other cases, priests conducted religious classes in pool halls, hotels, and any other place where they could assemble children. In this regard, the whole idea of the ministry as an educational agency must be explored in depth.

Volume III. Spirit of Renewal: From the Closed to the Open Door

From about 1920 to the end of the 1950's there was a general institutionalization of the official educational decisions made by the Church in

the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Parochial schools made great numerical progress and were aided by increasing criticism of public education. Although the Church engaged in many educational enterprises, her primary commitment was to extend and improve the parochial school system. Catholics made strenuous efforts to obtain public funds for these schools. At the same time, radio and television emerged as a possible vehicle for mass education and Catholics explored these possibilities for religious adaptation.

The Second Vatican Council in the early 1960's loosened previously rigid ecclesiastical structures. All segments of the Church's life came up for discussion and justification. There were new theological speculations, different frameworks for traditional moral positions, experimentation in worship services, and a questioning of the need for a parochial school system in contemporary America. The traditional rationale for Catholic schools--to defend immigrant Catholics against an alien society, first Protestant and later Godless, atheistic, and secularistic--no longer seemed relevant. America was no longer an immigrant society and the Catholic Church was no longer an immigrant Church. The alien society was gone and the Catholic "siege mentality" had been lifted. For the first time in half a century, Catholics began to challenge the parochial school as the primary way for the Church to fulfill her educational ministry. Calls were made to examine new alternatives while not necessarily eliminating all parochial schools. The 1960's witnessed much confusion over the very meaning of Catholic education. In the absence of any viable rationale, hundreds of schools closed under the superficial cloak of insufficient finances and personnel. Other schools retained a precarious existence as many Catholic churchmen and laymen remained in confusion

about the future.

In addition to the questions raised in the first two volumes, new queries undoubtedly will rise to the surface. What is the meaning of Catholic education within the rubric of the ecumenical movement? Are parochial schools still needed and under what conditions? What new educational options are now available to the Church?

V

In Catholic Education Faces Its Future (1968), Neil McCluskey concluded that "Catholic education is trembling on the brink of a new era of greatness." At the present time the emphasis seems to be more on "trembling" than on "greatness." In reality, Catholic education is in a state of disarray. It is rampant with myths, distortions, and ignorance. Its ideologies of the past seem irrelevant and no new gods have appeared in their place. The rich dimensions of its history remain virtually unknown except on a narrow institutional basis. Catholic education is fighting for its life and its future remains uncertain.

If Catholic educators come to understand the multiple dimensions of the Catholic educational past, they will be in possession of "a much greater range of options as to where to intervene for the better and how." I hope that my study will unlock the Catholic past and offer fresh insights to contemporary Catholic education.